



NEWS

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Judicial Council Wins National Award for Jury Instructions

San Francisco—The Judicial Council has won the 2003 Burton Award for Outstanding Reform, a national award for clear legal writing, in honor of the council's role in rewriting California's civil and criminal jury instructions.

At a recent ceremony at the Law Library of Congress, Justice James D. Ward, vice-chair of the council's Task Force on Jury Instructions, accepted the honor on behalf of the council's six-year program to rewrite California jury instructions into more concise and understandable language.

"I was very pleased to accept the award for the Judicial Council in recognition of the outstanding task force that has worked so hard to develop plain English jury instructions," said Justice Ward, of the Court of Appeal for the Fourth Appellate District, Division Two (Riverside).

"This is an enormous and challenging task," said Justice Carol A. Corrigan, chair of the task force. "We are gratified that the Burton Awards Program has honored the Chief Justice and the council for their vision." Justice Corrigan serves on the Court of Appeal for the First Appellate District, Division Three (San Francisco).

Launched in 1997 by Chief Justice Ronald M. George, the committee's work is an important part of the council's ongoing effort to reform and enhance the California jury system. A subcommittee headed by Justice Ward will ask the 27-member Judicial Council to approve a complete set of proposed civil jury instructions at the council's next public meeting on July 16, 2003.

The Burton Awards are dedicated to refining and enriching legal writing by both lawyers and law school students. Now in their fourth year, the program rewards authors who "use plain, clear and effective writing and avoid using archaic and stilted legalese."

Founder of the awards program is William C. Burton, a partner in the international law firm of D'Amato & Lynch and former New York State Assistant Attorney General. Burton is author of Burton's Legal Thesaurus. The program is held in association with the Law Library of Congress. Victor Schwartz, senior partner in Shook, Hardy & Bacon, chaired the committee that selected the council for the award.

The Judicial Council is the policymaking body of the California courts, the largest court system in the nation. Under the leadership of the Chief Justice and in accordance with the California Constitution, the council is responsible for ensuring the consistent, independent, impartial, and accessible administration of justice. The Administrative Office of the Courts carries out the official actions of the council and ensures leadership and excellence in court administration.